



The Great Lakes News

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Farewell Network Director

Staff, Colleagues, and Friends:

Over the past four decades, I have had the opportunity to work with some of the most incredible men and women, from eleven different VA facilities, in nine states, who took great pride in serving America's veterans and strived to make VA the best healthcare organization in the nation. I have gained much from these experiences with all of you; skills I applied in my daily labor, knowledge of the impact VA services have on those who earned our freedom, and friendships that will continue beyond my retirement from federal service. A sincere thanks is extended to all of you for making my career a rewarding journey.

As the VISN 12 Network Director, I am very proud of the achievements we have made together in VISN 12. We have served our nation's veterans well and represented the federal government in quality and excellence.

I wish you all continued success in the VA, in honoring the pledge Abraham Lincoln made in 1864, "To care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan."

You have my admiration for what you have accomplished and heartfelt pride in your future successes.

James W. Roseborough
Network Director, VISN 12



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Fisher House at Hines

Cold December temperatures and a snow storm did not dampen the spirits of more than 150 people who turned out for the groundbreaking of the VA's newest Fisher House on the Hines campus last month. The groundbreaking ceremony featured several distinguished speakers including Illinois Lieutenant Governor Pat Quinn, Director of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs, Tammy Duckworth, Fisher House Chairman Ken Fisher, and of course, Hines Director Nathan Geraths.

Cont. on page 2 See Fisher House at Hines

Fisher House at Hines

(Cont. from cover page)

The new Hines Fisher House will be one of the largest Fisher Houses built to date and an excellent benefit for the veterans and service members served at Hines. It will enable family members to be close to their loved one at an extremely stressful time - hospitalization.



"Hines is proud to be the recipient of the first Fisher House in the state of Illinois, where more than one million veterans live," said Mr. Geraths at the

groundbreaking ceremony.

When veterans are hospitalized at Hines, they are almost always accompanied by their husbands, wives, children, or parents. In order to be close to their loved one, our patients' families are currently staying at local Chicago-area hotels, which are quite costly and not always convenient to the hospital. Many times patients' families cannot afford to stay in a local hotel period. A Fisher House on our hospital grounds will allow Hines to offer our patients' family members top-notch free accommodations only minutes away.



Bob Gronko, Hines Voluntary Service Specialist, was honored to escort Tammy Duckworth, Director of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs, (IDVA) to the ceremony.

IDVA Director Tammy Duckworth, spoke at the groundbreaking ceremony about how beneficial she found the Fisher House to be when she was severely injured in a helicopter crash serving in Iraq a few years ago.

"The Fisher House is more than just a building that houses families of injured service members," she said. "It is a home that is filled with people who understand what you are going through at the most difficult time in your life. My husband and I both stayed in the Fisher House and we found it to be a very positive and uplifting experience. I'm so glad our Illinois service members will be able to take advantage of all that the Fisher Houses have to offer."



Lt. Governor Pat Quinn (pictured center) was a media favorite at the groundbreaking ceremony. More than 12 Chicago media attended the event

Veterans Service Officers and community groups, organizations and individuals who have been working on fundraising to bring a Fisher House to Illinois, also attended the ceremony. Deb Rickert, Chairperson of Operation Support our Troops -IL and the actor Gary Sinise donated \$50,000 to the continued operation of the Fisher House as well.

According to the Fisher House Foundation, the new Hines house will be opening in 2010, with construction beginning immediately.

Network News

Hines

Nurse Leadership Journey to the Summit: Destination Excellence



Hines Nurse Leadership held their first annual retreat October 27, 2008, at Hyatt Lodge, Oakbrook, IL. The retreat focused on Nursing's 2009 Strategic Goals and their impact on their Journey to Magnet Excellence. A highlight of the one day event was keynote speaker Mary Seaman, RN from James A. Haley VA in Tampa, FL. Ms. Seaman is the Director of Staff Relations/Nursing and former Chair of Tampa's Magnet Marketing Committee. Tampa was the first VA, of now three, who have Magnet Status. Ms. Seaman serves on the National Nurse Executive Council Workforce Development Committee and is Chair of the Nurse Certification sub-committee. She is also the Vice-Chairman of the NOVA Foundation.

The Magnet Recognition Program® was developed by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) to recognize health care organizations that provide nursing excellence. Based on quality indicators and standards of nursing practice, Magnet recognizes quality patient care and innovations in professional nursing practice. Hines VAH Director, Nathan Geraths, welcomed the group and shared his insight on the changing role of leadership in the VA and in Nursing. Nurse Executive Rita DuVal gave an in-depth review of Hines Nursing Service

Strategic Plan 2008-2009 and congratulated the attendees on their many accomplishments toward excellence. After a short presentation by Stacy Wroblewski on the new Magnet Model and a Magnet Journey to Excellence progress report, Mary Seaman energized the group with her talk "The Magnet Journey: Helpful Strategies." Her experience with James A. Haley VA's ongoing Magnet journey provided interesting strategies to engage nursing staff and the entire hospital in Magnet "fever."



Stacy Wroblewski (right) introduces speaker Mary Seaman, RN of Tampa VA.

Clinical Nurse Managers and Associate Chief Nurses developed action plans to enhance the image of nursing, create an environment for open and effective communication, and promote staff retention for Nursing Service. A final group discussion followed to weave the strategies together and to move the hospital further toward Magnet designation. Throughout the day Clinical Nurse Managers shared "Sparkplugs" – highlights and achievements of their unit staff.

The retreat ended with Rita DuVal distributing Journey to Magnet Excellence lapel pins and retreat participants signing a Hines VA Hospital Magnet Oath. Mr. Geraths and Ms. DuVal gave closing remarks. Geraths said "It was a pleasure to see the nurse managers all together. An incredible amount of work has gone into today's activities." Finally, he shared his belief that Hines can attain Magnet status and his pledge to fund what is needed to achieve it, which was met with a burst of applause and cheers.

A committee filled with creative ideas made every step of the "daytrip Journey" a treat. Candice Vitalo, CNM created a wall size road map of "The Journey to Excellence" with Magnet-themed stops. Rita DuVal

moved the Hines car along the road throughout the day. Six committee members presented a song skit "It's Fun to be on the Journey with You" (sung to the Village People's YMCA). Stacy Wroblewski wrote Magnet lyrics for a sing-along. Vilma Sims created a spectacular pumpkin floral display as a door prize. Table and workgroup markers were the effort of Nurse Vitalo and Nurse Mary Reed.

Several months of collaboration by Hines nursing planning group, Joan Murray from the Employee Education System (EES) and Jill Draime from the National Center for Organizational Development (NCOD) resulted in an outstanding and rewarding retreat. NCOD staff attended and facilitated work groups. Stacy Wroblewski, Magnet Coordinator and Dr. Sharon Zandell, Chief of Education Service, co-chaired the event.

Jesse Brown

VISN 12 Nutritionists Play Key Roles at ADA's Annual Meeting



Ellen Bosley, Director of Nutrition for VA Central Office (left) and Caitlyn O'Rourke, a Dietetic Intern at Hines VAH, posed at the VA booth during the American Dietetic Association's annual meeting in Chicago.

The American Dietetic Association attracted more than 10,000 registered dietitians, nutrition science researchers, policy makers, health-care providers and industry leaders to Chicago for the world's largest annual meeting

of food and nutrition professionals. The 2008 meeting was held October 25-28 to address key issues affecting the health of America.

Jesse Brown VA Medical Center, (JBVAMC) hosted the annual VA educational social. Forty-five VA dietitians and food service directors joined Ellen Bosley, VA Central Office's, (VACO) Director of Nutrition, for lunch at JBVAMC and then toured its new Bed Tower Pavilion, the "greenest" health care facility in the VA.

Jesse Brown VAMC also had two speakers at the convention. Anne Myslinsky, Clinical Nutrition Manager, spoke on the OEF/OIF transition to VA. Food and Nutrition Service Chief Chris Johnson spoke on Veteran Health Administration's (VHA) approach on healthy lives. Additionally, Hines VAH and Jesse Brown VAMC dietitians presented several posters regarding research studies they had done.

This year marks the 75th anniversary for the Hines VAH Dietetic Internship. A reunion was held with 85 dietitians attending.

Vietnam Veteran Receives Army Medals (and Missing Dog Tags) After 40 Years

JBVAMC hosted a touching ceremony on September 22 when Congressman Peter Roskam (6th District, IL) presented Vietnam veteran Gerald Trout with a number of long-overdue medals, including a Bronze Star and Purple Heart. However, the Congressman was upstaged by his own parents – V.R. "Swede" and Martha Roskam – who made a presentation of their own to Mr. Trout.

Seven years ago, the Roskam's had traveled to Vietnam, where they saw 37 American GI dog tags for sale in an alley trinket shop in old Saigon. Swede Roskam, a Korean War veteran, was angry that American dog tags were being sold as souvenirs and purchased them himself to remove them from the marketplace. They then began the challenging journey to return the dog tags to the veterans who had lost them or, in some cases, to the veterans' family members. Finding the owners was not as easy as they had thought it might be. The only information on the tags was the soldier's name, blood

type, religion and serial number. They enlisted the help of their son, Peter, who at that time was an Illinois state senator, who called the National Personnel Records Center in St. Louis, MO, to find the last known address the military had for each of the men.

The fact that many of these addresses were over 40 years old made the task even tougher, but the Roskam's hired a private investigator to track down the veterans and, as each was found, the Roskam's traveled to where the veteran or his survivors lived to present the dog tags.

The Roskams were successful in finding the owners and returning all 37 sets of dog tags. Mr. Trout, who had served with the 169th Infantry Brigade in Vietnam, was the last of the 37 to receive his tags.

Of the 37 tags, four of the soldiers had been killed in combat. Some others had died since the end of the war.

It was a very moving story and presentation that demonstrated how determined the Roskam family was to see the tags returned to the veterans or to their families, if deceased. "It was something we had to do – and we did it," Martha Roskam said, "I know that if we had lost a son, I would want anything that would honor his memory."

Iron Mountain

VA Medical Center Renamed for Local World War II Hero: Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center



World War II hero Oscar G. Johnson was remembered by many as a quiet, humble and modest man at the rededication ceremony which renamed the Iron Mountain VA Medical Center to the Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center.



Congressman Peter Roskam (left) presented a Purple Heart, Bronze Star and Army Commendation Medal to Vietnam veteran Gerald Trout (second from right) while son Mathew Trout (right) looks on. Standing next to the Congressman is John David, a VFW National Legislative Council Representative.



"I am proud to say that I knew Oscar Johnson," Congressman Bart Stupak said (Photo left).

"This renaming is a fitting honor to him and his family and it will remind us all of his valor and heroism."

This historical event of dedication was held outdoors under the pavilion on a warm sunny fall day and was attended by congressional staff, family members, friends and members of the community. Several of the special guests recounted Mr. Johnson's bravery and community involvement; they had nothing but fond memories and praise for him.



The family of Oscar G. Johnson at the re-naming ceremony

Johnson was born and raised in Foster City, Michigan and joined the U.S. Army during World War II. As a member of B Company, 363rd Infantry Regiment, 91st Infantry Division, Johnson single-handedly repelled a series of six enemy attacks and was one of only 37 men who survived the three day battle on Monticelli Ridge in Scarperia, Italy, September 16-18, 1944. He was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions and was credited with the deaths of 20 enemy troops and the surrender of 25 more.

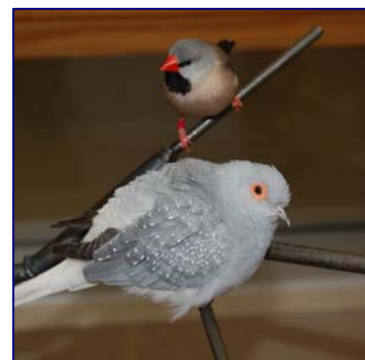
After the war, he continued his record of service by enlisting in the National Guard in Lansing, Michigan, holding the rank of chief warrant officer upon his retirement in 1980. After retiring, he moved back to Kingsford, Michigan.

Aviary Donation

The Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center recently received significant donations from the AMVETS Department of Wisconsin, the AMVETS Auxiliary Department of Wisconsin, and the American Legion Auxiliary Units 424



and 480 of Wisconsin. The medical center used these donations to purchase an aviary for the atrium in the Community Living Center. The aviary contains ten exotic tropical birds which include Saffron Finches, the Paradise Whydah, Shafttails, Orange Cheek Waxbills, and Diamond Doves.



These birds are native to different parts of the world, including South America, Australia, and Africa. The aviary creates a peaceful, relaxing environment for the patients who spend considerable time observing the unique personality of each bird and listening to their melodic songs.

Adopt-A-Family

The Adopt-A-Family program has been very popular with employees of the Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center along with visitors, patients and volunteers for the past thirteen years. The program is carried out by the medical center's Equal Employment Opportunity Committee and provides for local families who are experiencing hardships due to illness, financial struggles and other unforeseen circumstances.

In 1996, the Oscar G. Johnson VA Medical Center sponsored the first facility-wide Adopt-A-Family event. Since the program began, nearly 100 local families have received help for the holidays through generous donations from everyone involved. Employees of the medical center also assist with deliveries to the families homes.

Snowmen family displays located throughout the medical center and a holiday tree located in the Outpatient Clinic lobby are decorated with tags listing items of need for the families. Contributors are given the opportunity to choose a tag and to make this holiday season magical for someone special. Numerous wrapped gifts, toys,

food items, and gift cards are being collected and will be delivered to the families before the holidays.



From left to right are Angela Finley and Rita Rosen, coordinators of the Adopt-A-Family project.

Madison

HealthierUS Veterans Mini-Grant

Madison VAH has been awarded one of the HealthierUS Veterans mini-grants sponsored by the VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease prevention.



Kristi Rietz, Mental Health Occupational Therapist, prepared the successful submission which was titled *Therapeutic Landscaping*.

HealthierUS Veterans is a joint project between the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The focus of HealthierUS Veterans is to educate veterans and their families about the health risks of obesity and diabetes by eating healthy and being active. On this site, veterans and their families will find information about how to Eat Healthy, Be Active and Get Fit for Life.

There are 5 major components of HealthierUS Veterans, visit the following link(s) for more information.

www.healthierusveterans.va.gov/about_HealthierUS_Veterans.asp

[VA's MOVE! Weight Management Program](#)

[A Prescription for Health](#)

[Fitness Challenges](#)

[Collaboration between VA medical facilities and Steps to a HealthierUS and other HHS programs](#)

[A Fit for Life Veteran Volunteer Corps](#)

Toys for Tots Support by Canteen Service Continues

For the third year, the Madison VAH Veterans Canteen Service conducted a special one-day sales event on December 10th in support of needy children in the community. A 20 percent discount helped encourage shoppers to support the cause and donate to the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve *Toys for Tots Campaign*. Pictured below, Patty Seiler, Chief, Canteen Service (left), and Deborah A. Thompson, Director (right), with the donated toys purchased for the project. The mission of the campaign was to collect new, unwrapped toys for distribution by the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve as Christmas gifts. The primary goal was to deliver a shiny new toy as a message of hope and motivation to youngsters and encourage them to grow into responsible, productive, patriotic citizens.

Participation in the project was outstanding with over \$1,900 in toy purchases.



Milwaukee

Offices Go The Modular Route

The offices of the director and the chief of staff at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center will now have that “trailer park” look. The units were trailered to Milwaukee using a wide load permit and lifted into place on October 30. Pictured right, a 250-ton crane lifts one of the 12x60 foot modular units into position. In the interim time before the opening the units were connected, painted, heated, lighted and plumbing installed.



Rick Bruhn, division manager of facility management, explained that the use of the modular units will save the medical center money. “We opted to do the modular units as we needed to expand our clinic space and found for us it was more cost effective to use existing space within the medical center rather than do an annex that would be remote.” Bruhn cited issues with a remote clinic that would involve duplication of services already in place at the medical center and additional travel to and from for the patients and staff.

The space freed by the moved offices will be home for the Blue Clinic resulting in all primary care clinics in one area on the first floor. Construction for the new Blue Clinic will begin in February and be completed late in 2009.

This is temporary. Now what temporary means in the VA may be different than the dictionary definition. “We’re talking possibly four to six years,” said Bruhn. In those years, the spinal cord injury unit will open in a new building. The space it occupied will be gutted and the director and chief of staff offices will move to the former SCI space on the tenth floor. That is the plan but Bruhn acknowledges, “Time changes a lot of things.”

Domestic Violence Recognized

During the week of October 27, an unusual display was viewed in the Red Clinic waiting area at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center. A collection of hand painted T-shirts was strung along clothesline as if they were laundry hanging out to dry. The T-shirts are the property of the Women’s Center, a social service agency for women and children in Kenosha. The Women’s Center offers workshops for women who have been victims of violence where they can express their emotions by decorating a shirt. They then hang the shirt on a clothesline to be viewed as testimony to the problem of violence against women. <http://www.clotheslineproject.org>.



The Center is seen as a place where people should feel safe, but it is actually one of society’s most violent social environments, and it is especially dangerous for women. One in every four women will experience domestic violence (DV) in her lifetime. Females 20 to 24 years of age are at greatest risk and 1/3 of female homicide victims were killed by a domestic partner (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence Data). The cost of DV exceeds \$5.8 billion each year, \$4.1 billion of which is for direct medical and mental health services. In addition, victims of DV lose almost 8 million days of paid work a year (National Coalition Against Domestic Violence).

If you are in an abusive relationship or think you might be, your primary care provider or the primary care social worker at the VA can refer you to a VA counselor.

Visitor Friendly Waiting Room Supports CaringBridge Technology-To Share News, Celebrations, Comfort and Hope

I hope you never have to use the Web site CaringBridge. But, it is a wonderful tool. "I don't know what we would do without CaringBridge," said a family member who recently spent many long hours waiting and praying. Milwaukee VA Medical Center has added www.caringbridge.org to its ICU waiting room. Spreading the word about a family member or friend who is in the hospital or in crisis can be challenging, but the task is easier now, thanks to CaringBridge.

Families can use the computer based free service in the waiting room, or any place for that matter, to quickly build a custom Web site about their loved one and share it with anyone they invite. To date 150,000 families have created the free, personalized CaringBridge websites. The site can include photos and information about the patient, a journal that includes updates on their condition and a guestbook to be signed by site visitors.

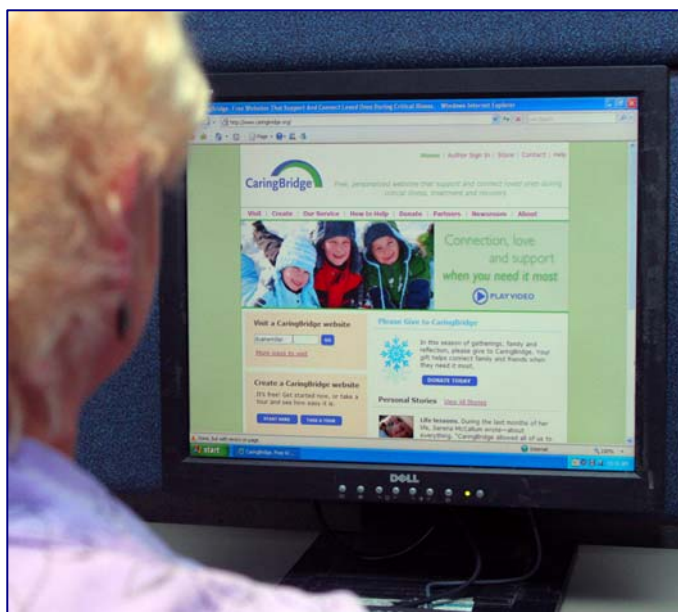
Family members who sit in waiting rooms for hours, days and weeks can write an update on their loved ones condition as it changes. It gives readers an account of what is happening and everyone gets the same information at the same time via the internet. Nurses in ICU's share that the use of this tool decreases the number of phone calls to the nurses' station.

The CaringBridge site allows the family to convey sad news without the burden of many emotional phone calls. It is a place to post a final message to honor their love one and their supportive community. Nearly 90 percent of the funding for the site comes from individuals and families who have been part of a CaringBridge experience. The remaining funds come from partnerships with health care facilities, systems and foundations.

Since the web site was founded in 1997, over half a billion visits by families and friends in 190 countries have been made. Over 150 new personal communities are created daily.

The nonprofit CaringBridge was founded after creator Sonia Mehring's close friend suffered a life-threatening pregnancy. Inspired to keep family and friends abreast of the situation, Mehring created the Web site. After her

friend's premature baby died nine days later, the family was able to convey the sad news on the site without having to repeat the message several times over. "My friends asked me to contact friends and family to let them know what was happening," Mehring said. "I soon realized what a large task that was. With my background in technology, I decided that instead of making phone calls to friends and family around the world, I would create a Web site where everyone could log on and find the information. The CaringBridge Web site instantly eased the burden of making all those phone calls and retelling the story. It provided an unbelievable connecting point for everyone concerned," Mehring said.



Volunteer Judy Miller brings up CaringBridge on the computer terminal in the ICU waiting room at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center. She is excited about the use of the technology in the waiting room. "It is a wonderful way to keep family and loved ones informed when someone is facing a serious health condition."



Shirley Jefferies Award Recipient from

Backstage to the Spotlight

With so many expressive words that could be used to describe this year's Shirley Jefferies Award recipient, his job title, "music therapist," just doesn't say enough.

As a strong supporter of the healing power of the arts, J.

Sheppard Crumrine (known fondly by family and friends as "Shep") is the 2008

Shirley Jeffries Award winner given October 26 at the National Veterans Creative Arts Festival (NVCAF) in Riverside, California.

Since 1998, Crumrine has performed backstage duties as the assistant stage manager for the sound crew at the NVCAF. He has also served on the national committee for the Festival since 1998.

"Shep is very personable and so easy going," said Bert Berger, PhD, a medical center psychologist and Crumrine's supervisor. "He is able to handle all kinds of clinical situations and the veterans really like him."

Crumrine coordinates a monthly activity called "the coffeehouse program," in which veterans prepare and present a stage show to other veterans, family and VA staff. The show is complete with live performances, lights and sound, plus coffee is made available by local service organizations. He also facilitates a popular music venue for veterans called, "The VA Jam Band," which travels around the city giving them the opportunity to develop musical skills and play a multitude of instruments.

"Shep is very active in the music recreational therapy community," said Berger. "In addition to his work at VA, he has appeared on television to talk about benefits associated with this type of therapy. He continues to perform research on the recovery aspect attributed to



music therapy as it pertains to persons with mental illness."

Music therapy is more than a job to Crumrine, it's his passion. His curriculum vita is ample with education and employment pertaining to this cause, but it's what is listed under the heading "Organization Involvement" that tells it all. Crumrine lists membership with 15 different music organizations, including the Knox-Galesburg Symphony, Peoria Opera Co., Illinois State University Symphony and Holy Rosary Choir. He is also the director of the local VA Choir and a member of "Staff Infection," a VA staff band.

"His commitment to veterans is evidenced by his caring attitude toward them, and by the way he spends time getting to know them," said Elizabeth Mackey, NVCAF Director who has worked with him at the national event for many years. "He strives to make their lives better through his own musical talents and music therapy and by assisting them in any way possible."

Although he holds a bachelor's degree in chemistry/pre-med from Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, Crumrine's educational background is diverse. He also studied music education and achieved his music therapy equivalency from Illinois State University in Normal, Illinois. Other institutions he attended include University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and Colorado State University.

War Dogs Make Friendly Visit

Residents of the Milwaukee VA Medical Center Community Living Center were thrilled by the recent war dog visit and the presentation by Vietnam veteran Jerry Whitt, a former dog handler in Vietnam. Six dogs paraded among the residents as each dog owner described the breed of dog they brought. Three Dobermans; (Bella, Jodi, and Cody); one Airedale (Scout); one German Sheppard (Max); and one little Yorkie (DD), proudly represented the various breeds that served during past and present wars.

Residents listened and watched attentively as Whitt showed a movie, slide show and related emotional and stirring accounts of War Dogs in combat. Whitt explained how War Dogs heroically saved thousand of lives during

the Vietnam War. He shared his personal story of how two different war dogs saved his life.

Residents reminisced about various war dogs they encountered during their service during World War II, Korea and Vietnam wars. A WWII veteran recalled his experiences with war dogs. "I remember while patrolling the perimeter, two German shepherds were with their handlers. I made sure to stay clear when they were patrolling as they were trained to protect and ward off the enemy."

During the summer the war dogs participate in local and state parades including the Positively Patriotic Parade at Reclaiming Our Heritage on the medical center campus.



John Moderski (pictured left), a resident in the Community Living Center at the Milwaukee VA and Bella, a Doberman, get acquainted during a visit of the war dogs. War dogs have an impressive history of military service.

The Army Quartermaster Corps began the U.S. Armed Forces first War Dog training during WWII. By 1945 they had trained almost 10,000 war dogs for the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard.

Dogs continue to serve the armed forces with distinction in Korea, Vietnam, Desert Storm, Afghanistan and Iraq and many recent contingency operations.



Honor Flight Provides an Honor for Milwaukee Staff Members

"You'd think we were coming back from Iwo Jima," said Bob Moen, 81, laughing as he spoke of his late-night airport reception in Milwaukee. Bob and 80 of his comrades were returning on November 19 from an Honor Flight to Washington, DC. "We were so tired and straggled out... It was like getting off the ship." Moen was right; over 400 supporters were at General Mitchell International Airport for the delayed arrival of the flight. When Moen and the other World War II veterans walked up the ramp to the main terminal, he was greeted by applauding "fans" of all ages waving banners and flags accompanied by a brass band playing John Phillip Sousa. Moen, using his walker, slowly moved nonchalantly past the saluting soldiers and sailor decked out in uniform.

This former Coast Guardsman saw service in WWII in the Aleutian Islands. Upon his discharge, he enrolled at the University of Wisconsin in Madison and in 1950 graduated with a degree in micro economics. Over the years since, he has undergone extensive medical treatment.

Moen, who now works in human resources at the Milwaukee VA Medical Center, was back at his desk the next day. As an incentive therapy worker, he has worked in HR since 1963 doing a wide variety of jobs. He likes what he does; "...it is diverse and I learn something new every day." He serves as corresponding secretary of VA Alumni Club and is a past commander American Legion Post 498 and is now the Senior Vice Commander of the VFW Post 2028 and a DAV Honorary Commander.

Talking about the trip he said, "It was a long day... walk, walk, walk." He was impressed with the memorial, the changing of the guard at Arlington and meeting Senators Dole and Kohl. "The memorial is tremendous. It's huge. It was really exhilarating. They had everything there but a lunch counter. We lived on box lunches," he quipped.

The Honor Flight Network is a national program started in 2004 in Ohio providing free passage to WWII veterans to make a one-day visit to the World War II Memorial. There are 52 hubs in 26 states according to its Web site, www.starsandstripeshonorflight.org. The Stars and Stripes Honor Flight is based in Port Washington,

Wisconsin, and plans the second flight from Milwaukee in May of 2009. Currently, there is a waiting list of 450.

Guardians accompany the veterans and pay their own way. Two from the Milwaukee Medical Center have been guardians including Reesa Gottschalk and Laura Rinaldi. Rinaldi escorted Bob Moen and Naomi Horwitz on the recent and the first Stars and Stripes Honor Flight from Milwaukee.



That day Moen was at the airport at 4:30 a.m. At the end of his day, he left the airport for his home in the domiciliary at about 11 p.m. He slept well.



North Chicago

Vestibular Rehabilitation Program Introduced

The Department of Audiology and Speech Pathology hosted an Open House on September 16th to introduce the Vestibular Rehabilitation Program at the North Chicago VA Medical Center (NCVAMC). Over the past year, the Audiology Department has collaborated with Physical Therapy to develop a program to accurately diagnose and successfully treat patients with vestibular disorders.

Why is this important?

Dizziness or loss of balance is one of the most common complaints heard in doctors' offices. There are many causes of dizziness; however, according to the National Institute of Health, 85% of all equilibrium problems can be directly related to an inner ear disorder. And now the NCVAMC has a program to help diagnose and treat patients with dizziness and balance problems linked to impairment of the inner ear.

Most common vestibular diagnoses of the NCVAMC Vestibular Rehabilitation Program are:

Benign paroxysmal positional vertigo; unilateral vestibular hypofunction; endolymphatic hydrops / Meniere's disease



“Celebration of Change” Name Change of the Skilled Geriatric Rehabilitation Unit

North Chicago VA Medical Center announced the name change of their Skilled Geriatric Rehabilitation Unit to Community Living Center. The name change is part of VA's nursing home culture transformation. The intent is to transform the culture of long term care to a resident centered model providing compassionate and comprehensive care to veterans in a homelike environment. The culture transformation movement is also expected to ensure increased satisfaction for both nursing home residents and staff. Areas of consideration include resident care practices, the environment, expanded resident activities, and improved dining initiatives. Special emphasis will be placed on residents from OEF/OIF to ensure age appropriate care.

On September 18th, 2008, a “Celebration of Change” was held to mark the official name change of nursing home units to the Community Living Center (CLC). A CLC logo was also unveiled.

“The intent is to transform the culture of long term care to a resident centered model providing compassionate and comprehensive care.”

The celebration included remarks by Mary Ann Cardinali, Associate Director for Patient Care Services, Dr. Jan Clarke, Chief, Geriatrics and Extended Care, and Pam Sanberg, Nurse Leader, CLC. The new CLC logo was unveiled and refreshments were served. Each unit in the CLC put together an exhibit illustrating Cultural Transformation Change and these were on display. Entertainment was provided by the Navy Band and Memory Makers DJ. A special thanks to AMVETS who donated and grilled hot dogs, the DAR, MOC, and PLAVA volunteers who served refreshments.

This name change is just one more piece of the changing culture in Geriatrics and Extended Care that reflects the North Chicago VA's ongoing commitment to resident centered, compassionate care. Thanks to all who made this celebration a success and be sure to tell your friends and co-workers: Change is coming!



Geriatric and Extended Care staff Charles Lucas and Dr. Laura Carothers unveil the new logo.

New Chapel Opens

On Monday, October 27th, 2008, the new Chapel/ Meditation Room in Bldg. 134, Rm. C115 of the Community Living Center opened for its first service which was Catholic Mass at 11:30 a.m. It was celebrated by Chaplain Bill Vander Heyden, Chief Chaplain; Chaplain Robert Florido; and Deacon Tony Martino. Wednesday, October 29th, at 12:30 p.m. saw the first mid-week Protestant Communion Service held by Chaplain Lyle Swanson.

The location of a Chapel/Meditation Room in the Community Living Center is part of a culture transformation under way at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

Many residents unable to make the long trip to the main Chapel will now be able to access spiritual resources in their own building.

The renovation of the room and new furnishings were funded by VA. Several organizations have joined to assist in a new broadcast system that will be installed in the future. Organizations involved are the Barrington



VFW Post 7706; DAV Stars and Stripes Chapter 83; Knights of Columbus Waukegan Council 731; and other private individuals.

Honoring Their Memory



On Sunday, October 26, 2008, a special Memorial Service was held in the All Faith Chapel, Bldg. 4, honoring veterans who have died at NCVA this past year. Seventy-nine veterans' names were included in the Roll Call. As each name was called, family members and loved ones were invited to light a

memorial votive candle in remembrance. Hospital staff also assumed the honor and included: Dr. Jan Clarke, Geriatrics and Extended Care; Rosie Elder, Head Nurse; Sheila Johnson, Recreation Therapist; and Susanne Brunner, Recreation Therapist.

Leading the prayer and remembrance was Chaplain Bill Vander Heyden, Chief Chaplain. The service also included readings from Chaplain Lyle Swanson, Chaplain Robert Florido, and Deacon Tony Martino. Music was provided by Chaplain Swanson's wife Donna.

"On the day of Final Reveille, may they all be present and accounted for."

Senator Akaka Visit

On Tuesday, October 28, 2008, Senator Daniel Akaka, (D-HI), visited Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes (NHCGL) and the North Chicago Veterans Affairs Medical Center (NCVAMC). The primary purpose of this trip was for Senator Akaka to gain a better understanding of the integration efforts of the future Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center. In joint coordination with VA



Senator Akaka greets Emergency Department staff at North Chicago VA Medical Center while touring facility with Medical Center Director Patrick Sullivan.

and Navy Office of Legislative Affairs, the congressional delegation included Mr. Ted Pusey, Professional Staff Member, Senate Veteran's Affairs Committee, Mr. Scott Hooks and Ms. Carrie Kagawa, Constituent Service Agents for Senator Obama, Mr. Tom Ferrone, Legislative Correspondent for Senator Durbin. Joining the CODEL was Mr. Paul Hutter, VA General Counsel, Rear Admiral Thomas Cullison, Navy Deputy Surgeon General, Mr. Jim Roseborough, VISN 12 Network Director, CDR Mary David, BUMED, Dr. Michael Welsh, President, Rosalind Franklin University and Medical School along with leadership and support staff from NCVAMC and NHCGL. An executive level brief given by Mr. Patrick Sullivan, Medical Center Director and Captain Thomas McGue, Commanding Officer Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes, and tours of both facilities, focused on the primary goals of this collaboration; to improve access, patient satisfaction, operational readiness, and the timely delivery of services for both the VA and DoD beneficiaries while improving efficiencies and reducing costs. They were all very complimentary and astounded with the results to date that can only be attributed to the extensive cooperation at all levels here at NCVAMC, NHCGL and with senior VA and DoD leadership. Senator Akaka asked that his thanks be conveyed to staff for the great job they're doing on the partnership and in caring for patients.

“Operation Teddy Bear”

Desiree Sheets of the Navy Federal Credit Union came up with the idea of using teddy bears to help calm children who come to the hospital for medical appointments. She got the idea from the paramedic who came to her home during an emergency call and gave her child a bear which really helped the situation. Desiree took that idea to the Navy Federal Credit Union where she works and her co-workers loved the idea. They donated sixty stuffed animals for the children who come to the Emergency Department at North Chicago VA. Desiree and Sonja Edgerton delivered all the bears. Everyone appreciates Desiree and the Navy Federal Credit Union for “Operation Teddy Bear” and for bringing smiles to the kids who come to North Chicago VA for treatment.



Pictured from left are Desiree Sheets, Kenny List, Chief, Community Affairs, Dr. Robert Sorensen, Acting Chief of the ED, Sonja Edgerton and a smiling Amanda Hamann.

“We Clean Our Hands - Do You?” Infection Control is Everybody’s Responsibility

The purpose of infection control week is to educate staff, patients, students, and visitors about the importance of infection prevention. Every year approximately 2 million patients get an infection while in the hospital and about 90,000 of these patients die as a result of the infection. These infections can be prevented if everyone followed the required infection control practices.

Patient safety is our number one concern and preventing infection is a patient safety issue. Patient safety is everyone's responsibility and so is infection control.



Hand hygiene is the single most powerful way to prevent the spread of many germs such as Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus-Aureus (MRSA) and C-diff. Only “fifteen seconds,” that is the amount of time it takes to prevent MRSA and other germs and bacteria from spreading. There are many reasons given by healthcare workers for not being compliant with hand hygiene. One of these reasons is that “I do not have time.” We can prevent our patients from acquiring infections in the hospital; all it takes is “fifteen seconds.” Remember, infection control is everybody’s responsibility. Always remember to perform hand hygiene before and after coming in contact with patients and remind fellow employees, patients, students and visitors to do the same. Since germs and bacteria also live on surfaces, be sure to clean your hands when coming in contact with the patient's environment. Use alcohol hand sanitizer for frequent disinfecting and to destroy MRSA bacteria. Use soap and water for C-diff, visibly soiled hands, before and after eating, and when using the bathroom. Our patients deserve safe high quality care and performing proper hand hygiene to prevent infection is a way to ensure that they are receiving the care they deserve.

Tomah

VA Employees Give The Gift Of Helping By Volunteering!



These people were so grateful for us being there. It was so hard to take their compliments and gratitude - we were not there for that. I cannot tell you how many times their comments brought me to tears. These people were going through a horrific tragedy, losing everything - Galveston was wiped off the map - and they were thanking us.

"I am not sharing this to brag for those of us called to assist. It was very rewarding and a humbling experience and I am very proud to be a part of what we did, and very proud to be a part of the VA medical center, and to work with VA employees from across the nation, who would not give up no matter what. Some volunteers were getting physically sick from the long hours day after day, and yet, they would not stop working. They refused to go home (to the hotel). They all kept on doing what they were doing. It was overwhelming to witness such dedication from all of these people."

Tomah VA staff answered the call to help others Hurricanes Gustav and Ike late this summer.

Five volunteers were deployed from VISN 12 for Hurricane Gustav; two of them were from Tomah. And there were 15 volunteers from the VISN deployed for Hurricane Ike; seven volunteers were from Tomah.

The Tomah VA is proud to have 93 volunteers on the Disaster Emergency Medical Personnel System (DEMPS) listing.

Mike Zellmer, the facility's Emergency Management Coordinator during this year's hurricane season, said VA employees are chosen to assist at these disasters because they know we are great caregivers. He complimented our DEMPS team, saying VA employees received great reviews for their work and those compliments were sent all the way to Washington D.C.

Diane Streeter, LPN, wrote the following for the Tomah VA employee newsletter, *"The evacuees that we took care of (some times up to 280 patients) all thanked us over and over for traveling great distances to help them. They were impressed with our compassion and kindness. Many times they shared that this was the best shelter that they had been to (some had gone through more than three before coming to us). Evacuees said they thought no one cared until they came to our station.*

Golf Expo

A golf open house was held for inpatients and outpatients in September.

The Expo introduced two new pieces of state-of-the-art golf equipment: Net-Return Driving Net System and "Explanar Biomechanics System" machine. Both pieces of equipment were recently donated to the facility by "Golf Supports our Vets." Veterans also enjoyed playing miniature golf, competing in a putting contest and trying their hand at playing "Wii Golf!"

The Tomah VA has a beautiful nine-hole golf course that is often used by ambulatory inpatients as well as the general public. At right, Physical Therapy Assistant, Jim Slawson demonstrates how the Explanar Bio-mechanics System can help one's golf swing.



Horses for Heroes

For two days this fall, a therapeutic riding event was held on the front lawn of the Tomah VA. Veterans enjoyed seeing a variety of therapeutic riding activities, as demonstrated by various staff and volunteers. Veterans participated in roping activities, target shooting (by popping balloons with a nail-tipped “spear”), and visiting with a miniature horse.



Kris Valest, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Supervisor, rides a horse backwards during one of the therapeutic riding demonstrations.

Horses' gait is similar to that of humans, so by riding a horse, the rider's body follows the same rhythm of the steps, which is helpful to those who can't walk on their own.

Veteran Receives Military Awards

Timothy Burden is a U. S. Army Vietnam veteran who was awarded double Purple Hearts, a Bronze Star and two Campaign medals.

In 1974, Mr. Burden lost all of his medals and his uniform in a house fire. In 1975 he requested replacement medals; however, he did not receive feedback on his request until 2005.

It was not until he was a resident at the Tomah VA that he received assistance by his social worker in obtaining



his medals. In March 2008, Al Benrud, CAPSW, assisted the veteran with writing letters to obtain replacement medals. On September 23, 2008, Mr. Burden's birthday, his replacement medals arrived.



Here, Toby Lane, Acting Associate Director, presented replacement medals to Vietnam veteran Timothy Burden in a celebration involving VA staff and fellow veterans.

Recovery Fest

The Recovery Implementation Committee observed Mental Illness Awareness Week, October 6–12. Veterans, family members and friends were invited to attend the activities held during “Recovery Fest.”

“Mental Health Recovery” is defined by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration as: “...a journey of healing and transformation for a person with a mental health disability to be able to live a meaningful life in communities of his or her choice while striving to achieve full human potential or “personhood.”

“Recovery Fest” included brown bag lunch presentations on Monday through Thursday, on topics such as the benefits of work and volunteering, stories of recovery and WRAP planning (Wellness Recovery Action Planning).

“Recovery Fest” concluded with a program featuring speakers and a feast on Friday, October 10. The keynote speakers were veterans who candidly portrayed their mental health recovery journey.



Deb Day, N.P., Recovery Coordinator, reads one of several appreciation plaques presented to those involved with Recovery Fest; Maureen Bernhardt, Recreation Therapist, assists with the presentations.

Well-Represented in First “Freedom Honor Flight”

Just like Milwaukee VA, Tomah had a most memorable trip for World War II veterans from Western Wisconsin.

The first “Freedom Honor Flight” flew from La Crosse to Washington, D.C., carrying 113 veterans and 55 volunteer guardians, as well as medical staff and members of the media.



The Tomah VA was well-represented on this chartered one-day trip to D.C. Seven veterans from the Tomah area, including Tomah VA resident Henry Weinberger, seated, pose for a picture at the WWII Memorial. One resident of the VA, several volunteers and three employees (who served as “guardians” for two veterans each) were among the travelers on this unforgettable trip.



After the visit to the WWII Memorial, the veterans also saw the Vietnam Wall, the Korean War memorial, Lincoln Memorial, the Marine Corps Memorial (Iwo Jima) and the new Air Force Memorial.

The flight home was made special by a pre-planned “Mail Call” – organizers of the flight had contacted the veterans’ families weeks before the trip and asked for letters to be sent for the veterans. The letters were sent to the Freedom Honor Flight office, sorted and then distributed in an “old fashioned mail call” aboard the plane. It was very touching to see the veterans receive wonderfully warm greetings and praises from their family members. The next Freedom Honor Flight will be in June 2009; more information is at www.freedomhonorflight.org.

2008 Employee Wellness Fair

The Tomah VA’s Federal Women’s Program & VA



Employee Health Services sponsored the 2008 Employee Wellness Fair in October.

Karen Wall, LPN (photo left) gives a flu shot to Alonzo

Gadson. This was one of 316 flu shots given at the annual Event. Every employee who received their flu shot that day received a card worth 59 minutes of excused absence. A variety of health screen-ings and health information was available through-out the day; over 300 employees took advantage of this great health promotion! Among the many screenings and services available, Tessie Saltzgiver took advantage of a reflexology treatment and a toe reading at the fair.



Do As I Say – And As I Do

Employees hear it all the time; “Get your flu shot.” To drive the point home, the Tomah VA’s Quadrad all got their flu shots at the same time.



Shown receiving their flu shots are Jerald Molnar, Medical Center Director; Dr. David Houlihan, Chief of Staff; Toby Lane, Acting Associate Director; and Patricia Ten Haaf, RN, PhD, Associate Director for Patient Care Services. The ladies giving the protection are Tessie Saltzgiver, RN, Sheila Jessen, RN; and Delores Furry, RN.

Heroes’ Freedom Run/Welcome Home Celebration

Over 150 people attended the first annual Heroes’ Freedom Run event on Saturday, October 11.

While open to the community at large, the focus of the event was the opportunity to welcome home our soldiers from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Fifty-one OEF/OIF veterans attended, with about half participating in the 5K run and the other half in the one-mile fun walk/run.

The youngest runner was six years old; the oldest runner was 72. Music was provided by three bands associated with Guitars for Vets.

OEF/OIF veterans were entered into a drawing for an electric guitar donated by the Dave’s Guitar Store in La Crosse and a Nintendo Wii donated by the Elks.



Runners take off at the first annual Heroes’ Freedom Run at the Tomah VA.

First Annual Fall Festival “Veterans Create For Veterans”

About 200 handmade winter hats were free for veterans to choose from at the Recreation Department’s first-annual Fall Festival in November.

“Veterans Create for Veterans” was an idea formed by a resident of the facility as he chatted with Health Aide Jane Thissen one day in July. The veteran wanted to crochet, knit, or loom items to keep others warm in the coming winter.

Although it was heat of summer and cold weather seemed far away, the project began immediately.

Veterans Create for Veterans meet once a month in the VICTOR center to pick up donated supplies. With the help and support of Recreation Therapy Assistant, Helene Stein, inpatients and outpatients as well as some staff participated in the hat endeavor.

One particular veteran was remarkably prolific in his mission, creating over 100 hats in joyous combinations of color and design. The hats were made on large circular looms, which are simple to use but produce an exceptional knit pattern no different than if they were created by traditional knitting needles. Each veteran attending the Fall Festival was encouraged to take a hat with color and design that pleased them. Veterans Create for Veterans wishes for all of Tomah's extraordinary veterans to keep warm with a hat as unique as they are.



Waiting Rooms Get Facelift

Tomah staff is working to make their waiting rooms more comfortable with a homier feel. Some of the new things that have been added are new magazine racks with a variety of new magazines which cover a broad base of interest for their guests.

Heath Aid Amy Olson has the overall responsibility for keeping the waiting rooms inviting for Tomah's customers. She obtains feedback via "Quick Survey" cards and one-on-one discussions; that information is shared at the facility's Customer Service Committee.

Furnishings and décor have been added to make the waiting rooms more customer-friendly. New wooden-framed clocks, larger and more comfortable chairs in some areas have softened up the feel of the rooms. Plans are progressing to purchase a beverage center for coffee, cappuccino, hot chocolate which will be token-operated. With our nation's younger veterans in mind, children's wall activity play centers and coloring books with crayons will also be offered to keep young hands busy while Mom or Dad are seeing their VA provider.

Combined Federal Campaign

The Tomah VA plans a variety of events to support the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). Buying green and gold "Mardi Gras" beads allowed staff to wear Packer clothes on Fridays; completing the CFC enrollment forms entered employees in a drawing for premier parking spaces; and, all staff could bid on cool prizes during the Silent Auction that was held "on-line" during the campaign.



The most exciting event of all was no doubt the "award" given to the member of the Quadrad who received the most money donated in a change jar. To reward the leader who helped raise the most money, Dr. David

Houlihan, Chief of Staff, got a tasty pie in the face at the kick-off event for the campaign!

La Crosse Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) Expands and Celebrates with Ribbon Cutting

Seven years ago, the Tomah VA opened the "River Valley Clinic," one of the facility's four Community Based Outpatient Clinics. In November 2008, that clinic was expanded in both space and services and the "new" clinic is now known as the "River Valley Integrated Health Center."

La Crosse and its surrounding communities comprise a citizenry exceeding 70,000. The initial CBOC in La Crosse sees approximately 5,000 individual veterans and that number is expected to increase. The River Valley Integrated Health Center was created to accommodate this trend.



Dr. David Houlihan, Chief of Staff, shares comments while Dr. Michael Brant, CBOC Mental Health Coordinator (center) and La Crosse Mayor Mark Johnsrud (far left) look on.

Its very name – “integrated health center” – is indicative of a new generation of service provision in which mental health is integrated with medicine, nursing, physical therapy, peer support services and vocational counseling. In keeping with this view of the whole person and in an attempt to further de-stigmatize and demystify mental health, planners chose a store-front location: the veteran can pick up groceries next door, stop for a latte, and drop in for the full compliment of integrated health services.

Ribbon cutting ceremony was held on November 25. La Crosse’s mayor attended, as well as several County Veterans Service Officers, field representatives of Senators Herb Kohl and Russ Feingold, and Congressman Ron Kind. Several veterans’ service organizations took part in the short and informal program at which testimonials of the importance of the clinic were shared.

Making the informal program more comfortable and friendly, the providers for the clinic took turns introducing themselves and describing their duties at the clinic. Long-time CBOC volunteer Al Schulze was asked to cut the ribbon to officially open the clinic.



Volunteer Al Schulze offers a salute after cutting the ribbon to officially open the River Valley Integrated Health Center in La Crosse.

2008 Provider Excellence Award

Laura Martin, PA-C, Medicine Service Line Manager, was selected as the recipient of the Tomah VA’s 2008 Provider Excellence Award. The recipient of this award is chosen by their peers as the provider who best embodies the following characteristics: best care possible, forward movement of mission, service, compliance with bylaws, veteran satisfaction, excellent interaction with staff, innovation, professionalism, efficiency and medical education.



Dr. David Houlihan, Chief of Staff, is pictured presenting the 2008 Provider Excellence Award to Laura Martin, PA-C.

Random Acts of Kindness

Editor's Note: This article appeared in the Tomah VA's "Weekly Highlights" and helps portray the kindness shown to veterans in VA and the special care provided.

He served as Chaplain at the Tomah VA for over 20 years. He is now a patient at our hospital. He has dementia.

Recently a student nursing assistant asked this patient if he would like to go to church services. Because of his dementia, she received little response; but she took him anyway...

The student nursing assistant is Erin Becker and we are very proud of her. As the two of them sat enjoying the service, Erin noticed such a quiet peace in the ailing pastor, something she had not noticed while caring for him on the ward.

Pastor Maynard Hofer noticed Erin had brought the retired pastor to the service. He acknowledged his presence at the close of the service and asked if she would bring him up after services to stand along side him to greet church goers as they left. What a moving moment for all three. The former Chaplain was greeted with such high esteem from those who remembered his time in the pulpit at our facility. Current Pastor Hofer cared so for the aging pastor and especially for Erin our student nurse who saw peace and contentment in a very dear patient.

Pastor Maynard Hofer expressed his thanks to Erin for her part in bringing the veteran to church and asked if she would do it again. Erin assured Pastor Maynard Hofer that whenever she was on duty she would make sure she would bring him to service.

It is random acts of kindness such as this that makes all of us proud of the work we do here.

VISN 12 Celebrates Prosthetics and Sensory Aids Service (PSAS) Day

The Veterans Health Administration designated November 6th as the first annual National Prosthetics and Sensory Aids Service Day, "Where Quality of Care Results in Quality of Life." At the end of World War II, no agency or method existed to provide quality prosthetics to America's disabled veterans. On November 1, 1945,

in response to both Congress and veterans, VA created the Prosthetic Appliance Service.

The VISN 12 Prosthetics and Sensory Aids Service (PSAS) Product Line seized the opportunity for celebrating the first National PSAS Days. Each site showcased an exhibit of prosthetics appliances. The exhibits included daily living aids, durable medical equipment, walkers, GPS, blind and low vision aid devices, prosthesis, CPAP and home oxygen equipment. The exhibits were educational and provided veterans and hospital staff with an awareness of the prosthetic appliances that are available to improve a veteran's quality of life.



Above right: Karen Blum, VISN 12 Prosthetic Representative experiences a prosthetic limb under the supervision of Richard Graebner, Milwaukee VAMC Prosthetist. "It was an amazing experience. It was very difficult to concentrate on each step I took. It gave me a greater appreciation of how the patient, prosthetist and therapist work as a team to reach their goal", Blum said.

The following is a small sampling of fun-filled activities organized by Prosthetics and Sensory Aids Service:

Hines – Orthotic lab demonstrated an AMFIT machine. The AMFIT is a machine for making custom foot orthotics. Everyone had a chance to stand on the unit and have the "hot spots" of their feet identified on the computer.

Madison – Demonstrated active aids for daily living. Everyone had a chance to use sock aids, button hooks and a seat assist.

Milwaukee - Prosthetic lab fabricated an artificial arm and leg which could be used by an able bodied person to perceive what an arm and leg amputee experiences

when using a terminal device such as a hook or living as a leg amputee.

North Chicago – Veterans who had participated in the Wheelchair Olympics were invited to answer questions. A veteran with a high technology IBOT power wheelchair provided demonstrations of climbing stairs and standing while in the chair. Prosthetics provided a crossword puzzle game to learn about devices and prosthetic staff. Wheelchair cut-out cookies were baked by the staff and served as refreshments.

Tomah - Provided visually impaired eyeglasses for everyone to try on. The eyeglasses simulated diseases such as macular degenerative and glaucoma and how it affects normal vision.

GLHRMS Employee Conference

On October 15-16, 2008, VISN 12 Great Lakes Human Resources (GLHRMS) held an all HR employee conference at the Brookfield Suites in Brookfield, Wisconsin. All GLHRMS employees were in attendance, as well as the Network and Deputy Network Directors and other VISN staff. The conference covered such topics as development of a GLHRMS mission statement, action plan for the future, customer service training and other HR operational issues.



Opening remarks were provided by Mr. Roseborough, VISN 12 Network Director and Wayne Davis, Manager, VISN 12 Human Resources. A mission statement contest was conducted, with the winning entry coming from Jim Kister, Security Specialist for the new GLHRMS mission statement: "Providing high quality, customer-centered, human resources management services to the

VA Great Lakes Health Care System employees, who, in turn, have the honor of serving our nation's veterans in VISN 12."

Guest speakers included Patty Guidet, M.D. who presented a discussion on the Integrated Ethics Program and Marc Hardy, presenting a lively discussion and learning session on customer service entitled, "Working in the Land of Odd: How to Deal with and Wow Those 'Other People' Inside and Outside Your Office."

The rest of the conference dealt with internal GLHRMS operational issues and included the development of an action plan to deal with such topics as communication, both internal and external, training needs, equipment and space, career ladder opportunities and employee recognition.

Breakout sessions for all sections in GLHRMS were conducted, including Recruitment & Placement, Processing & Records, HR Support Staff, Employee Relations/OWCP, Credentialing and Suitability, Classification/PI/Special Projects, HR Interns and HR Coordinators. The conference objectives were exceeded and many of the staff will be participating on work groups and project improvement teams with a goal toward providing even better, more consistent, and more timely customer service.

CARES

Jesse Brown VAMC Dedicates Inpatient Bed Tower

A crowd of almost 400 people, including dozens of family members and friends of the late Secretary Jesse Brown, attended the dedication of Jesse Brown VA Medical Center's new inpatient Bed Tower on September 18. The ceremony was held on the roof of the medical center's parking garage, overlooking the new addition.



The \$99 million, seven-floor, 224,000 square foot addition is the first medical center constructed by VA nationwide in 12 years and the first in Chicago in over 50 years. It includes 200 inpatient beds, seven operating rooms, a cystology room, inpatient dialysis, outpatient surgical center and a chapel.

WLS-TV news anchor Harry Porterfield, who has previously profiled JBVAMC staff and veterans on his popular "Someone You Should Know" series, served as Master of Ceremonies. A highlight of the program was the unveiling of a life-sized portrait of Secretary Brown by artist Tom Nielsen, who also painted the original official portrait on display in VA Central Office.

Following the unveiling, Secretary Brown's sister, Dorothy Hillard, represented the Brown Family and spoke about the legacy of the late Secretary and the significance of the Bed Tower in providing care to Chicago area veterans.

During his remarks, Medical Center Director James S. Jones also emphasized his request for staff members to serve veterans in the spirit exemplified by Secretary Brown and spoke of the challenge to the medical center in living up to its name.

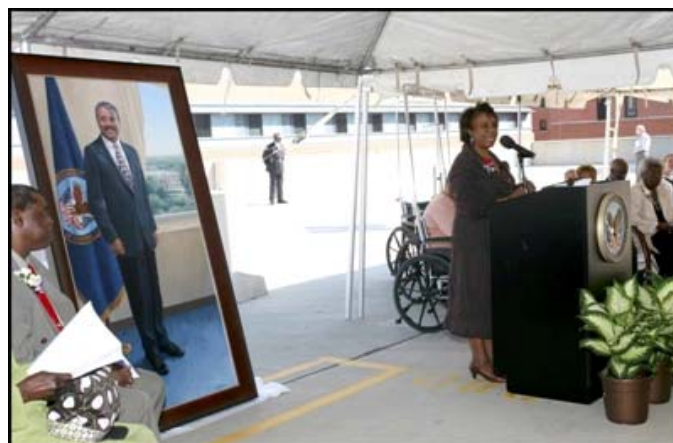
"Jesse Brown demanded that our Nation's veterans receive nothing but the best," said Jones. "And when this medical center was renamed in his honor, it included an implicit challenge. We had to provide our patients with the highest quality of care and the finest customer service. If we didn't, we would not be worthy of the name of Jesse Brown."

The Bed Tower was funded through VA's national CARES (Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services) initiative, which resulted in the consolidation of the two VA medical centers in Chicago into one facility. During his remarks, VISN Director James Roseborough praised the efforts of JBVAMC's staff, affiliates and patients.

"Every VA medical center, nationwide, went through the CARES process and I can tell you that none were confronted with a greater challenge than the one we faced in Chicago – to consolidate the Lakeside and West Side medical centers, each with its own distinct patient base and separate medical school affiliations that are

among the oldest and strongest in the Department of Veterans Affairs," Roseborough stated.

"The fact that we were able to complete this task as successfully as we did is a tribute to the dedicated employees of this medical center, the collaboration of our affiliates at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine and the University of Illinois at Chicago College of Medicine and the support of the veterans we serve."



Ms. Dorothy Hillard, sister of the late Jesse Brown, made remarks on behalf of the Brown Family following the unveiling of Secretary Brown's official VA portrait.



Participants in the ribbon cutting ceremony were (from left) Medical Center Director James S. Jones, Lucille Brown (Jesse Brown's mother), Carmen Stewart (Jesse Brown's daughter), Dorothy Hillard (Jesse Brown's sister) and VISN Director James W. Roseborough.

Network Awards and Recognition

Sandra Gregar Named Associate Director of Tomah VA

Sandra K. Gregar has been named the new associate director of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Medical Center in Tomah. She assumed the position December 7, 2008.

Gregar comes to Tomah from Madison where she served as the Deputy Director of Patient Financial Services, a consolidated patient account center for Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 12, which consists of seven VA facilities in Wisconsin, Illinois and Michigan. She served in that capacity since October 2006. Previously the Administrative Assistant to the

Medical Center Director at the Tomah VA Medical Center from 2003 – 2006, Gregar's prior experience at the Tomah VA is extensive. Gregar's history includes:

Acting Performance Improvement Director; Support Service Line Manager with responsibility for Pharmacy, Nutrition and Food Service, Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Service, Supply Processing Distribution, Dental, Radiology, Pathology and Laboratory



Medicine Service, Community Based Outpatient Clinics, and Recreation Therapy. Prior to that position, Gregar served as the Chief of Nutrition and Food Service. She has served as Acting Associate Director at the Tomah VA on numerous occasions.

Gregar received her Bachelor's Degree and Master's Degree in Food Science and Nutrition from the University of Wisconsin – Stout in Menomonie. She is a Member of the American College of Healthcare Executives. Gregar completed the VISN 12 Leadership Development Program, Executive Career Field Program, and Healthcare Leadership Institute.

Gregar will be relocating to the Tomah area upon the retirement of her husband, Colonel Thomas Gregar,

Deputy Chief of Staff for Logistics with the Wisconsin Army National Guard.

VA's Hands and Heart Award Winners



*Katherine Miller, RN, was selected as **Tomah** VA's recipient of the Secretary's Hand and Heart Award.*

The Nurse Manager of the Ironwood Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC) in Ironwood, Michigan has received a prestigious award for exemplifying the finest in patient care.



Kelli L. Stanczak, R. N., MSN, CSCS, (center) an employee at one of the **Oscar G. Johnson** VA Medical Center's outpatient clinics was recently awarded the Hands and Heart Award. "The performance of this compassionate, courteous, and caring individual has enabled us to better achieve our mission – providing the best possible care for our Nation's veterans," noted Michael J. Murphy, Medical Center Director.

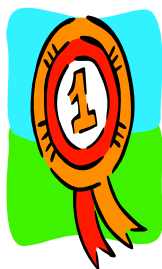
The Heart and Hands Award was established in 1980 and is given to a VA employee that administers direct patient care and does the most each day to exercise professional expertise as well as emotional support, help, and guidance.

Stanczak joined the VA staff in May of 2006. She lives in Ironwood with her husband Gregg and their son, Michael.

When presented with the award, it was noted that Ms. Stanczak consistently “shows concern and compassion for all of her patients, taking time to listen, explain and teach. She sets an example for others, going above and beyond the call of duty in responding to veteran medical needs,” noted Mr. Murphy.

Bednar Receives Two National Awards

Keith Bednar, Chief, Environmental & Support Service at the Madison VAH, was named the Outstanding Environmental Manager Award winner for his exemplary leadership and service to veterans by the Environmental Programs Service VA Central Office. Bednar was also named the American Hospital Association’s American Society of Healthcare Environmental Services (ASHES) James Wolfbrandt Mentor Award winner for 2008.



Employee/Volunteer Celebrations

Iron Mountain, Madison, and North Chicago Medical Centers Enjoy Employee and Volunteer Activities



The all employee picnic was held on Friday, September 5, 2008, in the pavilion area at **Iron Mountain**. The theme for the picnic was “VA Idol.” This was a karaoke contest where prizes were awarded to the top performers by the infamous Idol judges, Randy, Paula and Simon. There were some great performances and costumes! Once the talent competition wrapped up, Michael J. Murphy, Medical Center Director, announced the Director’s Team Awards. There were many pleasantly surprised employees who received well-deserved awards! A barbeque lunch with all the “fixins” followed the award ceremony. During the event, employee names were drawn to win a variety of great prizes. Staff that work off tours were treated to either breakfast or dinner and those that work at the Community Based Outpatient Clinics were sent gift cards for Subway Restaurants.

The annual awards celebration and picnic for **Madison** VAH employees and volunteers was held in early October. New this year was the addition of two staff recognition features: a slideshow of staff to highlight achievements over the past year; and the presentation of Director’s Team Innovation Awards.

The innovation awards were presented to teams of employees who were nominated by other staff members and approved by supervisors/service chiefs for their accomplishments over the past year. Innovation awards were presented in the following categories:

Improvement in Customer Service and Satisfaction; Technology; Improvement in Workplace Satisfaction; Resident/Trainee Experience; Safety Culture; Performance Improvement; and Community Service.

These events took place inside a large, enclosed

banquet tent, which came in handy as it was a chilly day. Over 1,200 people enjoyed the standard



picnic fare which included bratwurst and hotdogs.

Evening and night shift employees were served indoors, with the slideshow being aired during all serving times so that all staff had a chance to see the achievements of their fellow employees.

At **North Chicago VAMC** a carnival theme marked the festivities for the annual Employee Celebration which was held on Thursday, October 2, 2008 recognizing and thanking all staff for the accomplishments for 2008. This event was held to highlight all staff for their hard work, dedication and leadership. The festivities included Bozo the clown ball toss, pick a duck, photos with the strong man, refreshments, and a time to socialize with fellow coworkers.



To begin blending cultures, Navy individuals, both civilian and military, that were recognized during 2008 were invited to the celebration. Staff truly enjoyed themselves at this function.

POW/MIA Day Observed Across VSN 12

The National POW/MIA Recognition Day was celebrated at the **Iron Mountain VA Medical Center**.

The National POW/MIA Recognition Day was celebrated at the VAMC on Friday, September 19, 2008, at 11:00 a.m. This event honored all Americans who are former Prisoners of War (POW) and those who are Missing in Action (MIA) and their families. The public and staff

were invited to the event; the warm, sunny autumn weather welcomed approximately 100 guests.



Seventeen local POWs were introduced and presented with a commemorative POW/MIA Recognition Day mug. The event-filled celebration included a Parade of Bikes by the VFW Riders, Presentation and Retirement of Colors by the American Legion Post #50, and music by the Kingsford High School Concert Chorale. The hour long celebration was followed by light refreshments provided by the Veteran Canteen Service.

The **Tomah VA Medical Center** held its annual POW/MIA Recognition Day in September. The family of a former POW who had been cared for at the facility spoke about their father, telling his story of bravery and life after the war. The annual candle lighting ceremony to remember Wisconsin's MIAs from Vietnam was as poignant as ever.



Veteran Margaret Marchetti salutes during the candle lighting ceremony remembering Wisconsin's MIAs from the Vietnam War. A candle represents each MIA and program attendees take turns lighting the candles as each name is read.

VA Police at the **Milwaukee** VA Medical Center raise the flags on POW/MIA Day as American Ex Prisoners of War look on. The ex-POW's also spoke of their experiences to the students at Wisconsin Lutheran High School.



Annual Veterans Fair/Stand Downs

The second annual Veterans Service Fair sponsored by **Jesse Brown** VAMC's Patient Health Education Committee on October 8th was a great success, attracting over 700 veterans. The fair is designed to show veterans and their families how the medical center staff works together to provide the highest quality service and excellent care. A similar fair held the previous week at the Crown Point CBOC was also a winner, attracting 400 veterans.

Every medical center department participated by putting together an interactive display to provide a greater awareness to patients and staff of the vast array of services at JBVAMC. Prizes were awarded to the displays that were the most creative (Police Service) and the most interactive (Mental Health Service Line).

A variety of health screens were also offered, with veterans receiving a total of 185 flu shots, 145 blood pressure, 145 glucose and 115 cholesterol screenings. The Veterans Benefits Administration provided benefits information and claims initiation and the medical center also offered space to 12 other veteran community resources, including local colleges and universities, to promote their programs and services to veterans. Hundreds of door prizes were given to those veterans who visited every display.

"We are fortunate to have loyal veterans and dedicated employees to make this event the success it was meant to be", said Levi Laroco RN, MSN, coordinator of the annual one day event.

Tomah VA Medical Center held its 11th annual Veterans Stand Down was held in Onalaska (just outside of La Crosse) in October.

Over 200 veterans and 23 family members were able to access a wide array of VA and community services. Each veteran received a backpack filled with personal care items, had the opportunity to receive basic health care screenings and a flu shot, meet with VA and community resources, and enjoy a free lunch. Thirty-



nine different agencies were represented and 60 volunteers helped ensure an organized and effective day for the veterans. Veterans in attendance included those who served in WWII through current active duty soldiers; veterans were from La Crosse and five surrounding counties.

Halloween Day Activities

The Spirit of Halloween was Alive and Well at Some of our VA Medical Centers

Hines celebrated Halloween with an employee costume contest as well as with the traditional Hines Childcare Center parade through Building One. Children and the parents, including Emma Stamenkovich and her mother, dietitian Deborah Stamenkovich (pictured front right) were enthusiastic participants in the day's events.



Patients, staff, and volunteers at the **Madison** VA Hospital greatly enjoyed the variety of entertaining costumes that traveled the halls in celebration of Halloween. Not only were several staff and volunteers in costume that day, but the children of the VA Kids Center made the rounds as well. The volunteers conducted their very popular annual candy guessing contest for the inpatients with \$100 in cash prizes.



The children of the VA Kids Center take a break



*Megan "I Love Lucy" Richardson (second from right), Nutrition & Food Service, won the prize for Best Costume at **Jesse Brown** VAMC.*



Karen Bell (third from left), a member of Pharmacy Service at JBVAMC's Crown Point CBOC, received the Best Costume prize for her depiction of a witch.



A cat-faced pumpkin carved by SICU employees received Best Prize in JBVAMC's inter-departmental Pumpkin Carving Contest.



Fee Basis employees dressed up – Lisa Schueller, Fee Basis Clerk – Hippy, Renee Bailey, Fee Basis Clerk - Peace (and) Kris Nee, Fee Basis Clerk – Quiet, Kate Sheets, Fee Basis Clerk - Fee Basis Witch, Shari Baumgarten, Fee Basis Clerk - Fee Basis Princess, Audrey Marti, Coder– “G.I. Audrey”, Allyssa Hansen, Coder - Grapes

Tomah VAMC staff in Building 408B are dressed up in a FISH THEME – can you find all the different fish?



Kari Courtney - Red Devil Fish, Dave Nelson - Blue Fish, Jane Winters - One Fish, Bob Winters -Two Fish, Mike Calhoun – Fisherman, Dave Zink - Fried Fish, Rose Arndt - Sucker Fish, Rita Taylor - Blow Fish, Linda Wildes - Star Fish, Kathy Garrett - Box Fish, Tom Borgert - Bone Fish, Danita Dubord –Walleye, Janelle Arnold - Clown Fish, Alona Schultz - Blue Gill, Renee Schroeder - Cat Fish, Tracy Erickson – Goldfish, Jeri Klohs – Sunfish. Bill James - Bill Fish, Dr. Carla Heeden – Star Fish (missing from the picture), Jane Thissen- Rainbow Fish (missing from picture)



Volunteer Pat Soulier dressed up as The Great Pumpkin



Veterans Day Observations

Employee Veterans Honored at Hospital Ceremony

Hines celebrated Veterans Day in a very special way this year. In an effort to recognize employees who have served in the military, the Hines Employer of Choice Committee sponsored an extremely successful Employee Veteran Recognition Ceremony to honor employee veterans who have given service to their country as members of the United States Armed Forces and as dedicated employees of Hines VA Hospital.

The ceremony was held in the hospital auditorium and featured a color guard, cake and an elaborate reception. Almost 200 employee veterans were recognized at the ceremony and many more have certificates and pins on the way. Facility leaders, including Director Nathan Geraths, were there to congratulate every employee veteran.





The Hines Employee Veteran Celebration featured special refreshments like the above cake, thanking employees for their service to our nation.



Assistant Director Jennifer Gutowski congratulated Hines nurse and veteran Mary Reed on her distinguished service to the country.

The art students at **Iron Mountain** High School made a banner to say “thank you” to veterans for their service to our country in honor of Veteran’s Day. The art students asked the high school students to sign the banner as a token of appreciation for all that veterans have done to secure our freedom.



The banner was presented to four veterans enjoying the Atrium in the Community Living Center (CLC), starting from the left, Charles Boggetto, Herb Etten, William Neu, and Gordon Grams, by Iron Mountain High School art students, Alyssa Celello on the far left and Hillari Ward on the far right. The veterans receiving the banner were appreciative and humbled by the thoughtfulness of our youth. The banner is displayed in the CLC dining room for all veterans and their guests to enjoy.

Director of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs Speaks to Veterans

Jesse Brown VA Medical Center’s multi-conference center was packed with veterans, staff, visitors and



Members of the media on Veterans Day as the medical center welcomed guest speaker Tammy L. Duckworth, Director of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs.

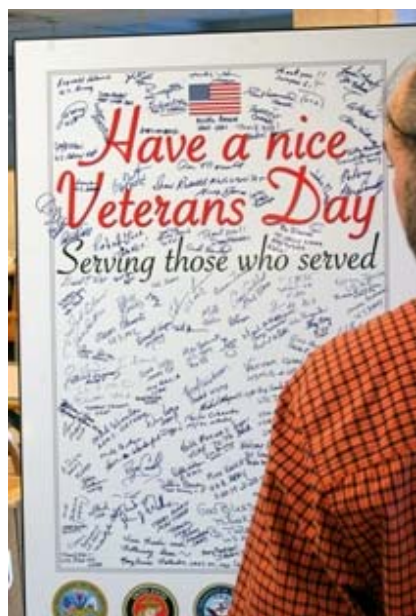
Duckworth, an Army veteran who served in Operation Iraqi Freedom and received combat wounds that cost her both of her legs and damaged her right arm, emphasized the need for VA to make sure no veterans “fall between the cracks” and talked about her proposed initiative that veterans in Illinois who are at least 50 percent service connected would be exempt from paying property taxes.

The program also featured members of the Hubbard High School Jr. ROTC that posted a ceremonial wreath at the conclusion of the service, remarks by the medical center director and a musical salute to veterans performed by members of the Jesse Brown Veterans chorus. Following the ceremony, a luncheon was

served by Voluntary Service that included 100 pizzas that had been donated by the very popular Chicago restaurant Home Run Inn. Lunchtime entertainment was provided by a blues group comprised of JBVAMC veterans.



Tammy L. Duckworth, Director of the Illinois Department of Veterans Affairs, was the guest speaker at the JBVAMC Veterans Day program and stayed afterwards to sign autographs.



Although Veterans Day was observed with the traditional standing-room-only ceremony at the **Milwaukee** VA Medical Center, an addition was a Veterans Day card displayed in the Canteen signed by employees who served in the armed forces.

Veteran employees at the medical center and clinics were also treated to an appreciation lunch to honor their service. Employees who could not make the lunch received an Arch Card from McDonalds. Over 450 employees participated.

Staff, patients and community came together on November 6th as part of **North Chicago** VAMC's Veterans Day observance to pay tribute to our nation's veterans, and recognize our debt to the men and women whose patriotic service and sacrifice have kept our nation free and prosperous.

The program was held in Bourke Hall and featured posting of our nation's colors by the Lake County Marine Corps League Detachment 801 and the national anthem played by Voice of Veterans. Colonel David Aumuller of



The Lake County Marine Corps League Detachment 801 Presented the Colors

MACG 48 shared inspirational words for our veterans and Voice of Veterans performed their moving songs of veterans' experiences. The program also featured the Marine Corps Birthday cake cutting by the ceremonial sword. A piece of cake is presented to the oldest marine and he in turn presents a piece to the youngest marine.

It was our privilege to say "thank you" to all of America's veterans, to let them know that we appreciate them for their service and honor them for their sacrifices.

Two veterans were inducted into the **Tomah** VAMC's "Hall of Heroes" during the facility's Veterans Day program.

Peter Quirin and Henry Weinberger joined eight previously honored soldiers in the "Hall of Heroes." The two were selected from fifteen nominations reviewed for this induction.

Retired Lieutenant Colonel Peter Quirin served two years in Viet Nam as an advisor to the Vietnamese Army, as an Infantry Company Commander in the 101st Airborne Division and as a logistics officer in the 173rd Airborne Brigade. Quirin was awarded two Silver Stars and a Purple Heart as a result of his actions in combat with the 101st Airborne Division. He was also awarded three Bronze Star Medals for Valor, The Republic of Vietnam Gallantry Cross and the Combat Infantryman Badge for his actions during service in Viet Nam. Quirin was an Army Airborne Ranger and retired after 30 years service on August 31, 1992.

In December 2004, Quirin was appointed by Wisconsin Governor Jim Doyle to serve as the Sheriff of Monroe County, Wisconsin from January 1, 2005 to December 31, 2006 where he retired after serving eight years with the Monroe County Sheriff's Department.



Henry Weinberger, far right, stands by his Hall of Heroes display, with his four daughters.

The "HALL OF HEROES" serves as a reminder of the hardships and bravery our veterans have endured for our nation.



Pete Quirin stands before the Hall of Heroes display at the Tomah VA.

Henry Weinberger served in World War II from August 1941 until May 1945, seeing action in Sicily, Salerno, Anzio, France and Germany. His records show 511 continuous fighting days; Weinberger recalls he was the only one out of the 180th Infantry that was not killed or captured. He was awarded the Silver Star, Legion of Merit, Bronze Star, Purple Heart, Combat Infantryman's Badge, American Campaign and World War II Victory medal.

MOVE Programs

Two VA Medical Centers Get Involved in "MOVE"!

The **Madison** VAH MOVE! Program is seeing positive results with patients losing weight. During FY08, 72 % of the unique patients seen at Madison have had a body mass index (BMI) of greater than 25 and are considered as being overweight. Many of those patients have at least one weight related co-morbidity as follows: 17% have a diagnosis of Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus; 40% have a diagnosis of Hypertension; and 37% have a diagnosis of Hyperlipidemia. Upon chart review of patients seen starting in FY08, 76% have lost weight with an average loss of 7 pounds. The average age is 64 and 90% are male and 10% female.

The goals of MOVE! Program is to: address obesity in the VA; integrate treatment with traditional primary care using best available medical practice; work with veterans in their stage of readiness to encourage small, sustainable lifestyle changes to promote gradual, but lasting weight loss; and evolve: evaluation, identification of best practices, and integration with new evidence.

Here are some examples of what the patients are saying about the MOVE! Program on their group class evaluation forms:

"I really enjoyed the class and would look forward to attending other classes when available."

"Excellent program well planned out, great staff presenting various parts, staff very personable and caring!"

"I'm a recently retired RN who worked at Meriter and University of Wisconsin Hospitals - I am so impressed with all the staff here. You are great!"

Future plans for the Madison MOVE! Program include:

Expansion of Level 1 to the CBOC's - capitalizing on progressive technologies: Tele-Health.

Improving the MOVE! Program referral process - same day enrollment in MOVE! is ideal - using Mental Health triage as a model.

Exploring Level 3 - offering weight loss medications to eligible veterans.

Preparation for Level 5 - offering bariatric surgery referrals - adhering to referral criteria established in the program handbook.

Additional staffing to support program expansions.

The success of the Madison MOVE! Program is team effort!



A veteran participates in a one-on-one MOVE! Program teaching session with Anna Wiley.

Veterans, staff, and members of the community enjoyed the second annual "Get Fit for Life Night" in October.

Attendees had a little "R&R", that is, Relaxation and Personal Renewal and an overall fun evening. Many health-related door prizes were awarded including a health spa gift basket.

Deena Olson, Tomah VA Physical Therapist, spoke to the audience on the effects of stress on the body and the importance of simple exercises such as breathing in creating the balance we all need in our hectic and stressful lives. Audience members loved her dynamic style and practiced relaxing their trapezoid muscles during the program.

Kelly Christen, Clinical Dietitian and MOVE (Motivating Overweight Veterans Everywhere) Program Coordinator, invited veterans to take part in the behavioral, nutritional and activity focused MOVE Program in order to get some help in losing and controlling their weight and well-being.

Kathie Bauer, RN, Certified Hypnotherapist, Healing Touch Practitioner helped participants examine the personal stressors and issues in their lives and to recognize that although we can't change the events that occur in our lives, our reaction to them is really what determines the outcome. Ms. Bauer also led the group through progressive relaxation exercises and self hypnosis process which some people found very helpful in refocusing their minds. The bottom line message was that everyone has an enormous power within to create a better future through

use of positive self messages and visualizing the future we want to have.

The Get Fit for Life Night was sponsored by the HealthierUS Veterans Committee with sponsorship by the Veterans Canteen Service.

Shinseki Sworn In, Vows 21st Century Service to Veterans

Retired Army Gen. Eric K. Shinseki took the oath of office January 21, 2009 as the Nation's seventh Secretary of Veterans Affairs, assuming the leadership of the Department of Veterans Affairs following Tuesday's confirmation by the Senate.



"The overriding challenge I am addressing from my first day in office is to make the Department of Veterans Affairs a 21st century organization focused on the Nation's veterans as its clients," Shinseki said.

Shinseki plans to develop a 2010 budget within his first 90 days that realizes the vision of President Obama to transform VA into an organization that is people-centric, results-driven and forward-looking.

Key issues on his agenda include smooth activation of an enhanced GI Bill education benefit that eligible veterans can begin using next fall, streamlining the disability claims system, leveraging information technology to accelerate and modernize services, and opening VA's health care system to veterans previously unable to enroll in it, while facilitating access for returning Iraq and Afghanistan veterans.

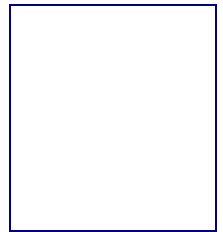
Shinseki, a former Army Chief of Staff, takes the reins of a 284,000-employee organization delivering health care and financial benefits to millions of veterans and survivors under a \$98 billion budget authorized this year through networks of regional benefits offices and health care facilities from coast to coast.

Born in 1942 on the island of Kauai, Hawaii, Shinseki graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., in 1965. He served two combat tours and was wounded in action in Vietnam. He served with distinction in Europe, the Pacific and stateside, eventually becoming the Army's senior leader from June 1999 to June 2003.

Retired from military service in August 2003, Shinseki's military decorations include three Bronze Stars and two Purple Hearts.

Shinseki succeeds Dr. James B. Peake as Secretary of Veterans Affairs.

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